



The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business

Reference: MC22-000845

Professor Shirley Randell AO
President
Independent Scholars Association of Australia
GPO Box 268
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Dear Professor Randell

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 March 2022 on behalf of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia (ISAA), regarding free TAFE courses and the skilled workforce shortages.

I appreciate ISAA's input concerning these matters and acknowledge the importance of TAFE and vocational education in the creation of a skilled workforce.

The Australian Government has been focused on the recovery of the economy and the creation of a skilled workforce throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government's \$2 billion JobTrainer Fund is providing free or low fee training for job seekers and young people, including school leavers, to upskill or reskill in areas of identified skills need. It is available for both full qualifications and short courses, with the list of courses agreed between the National Skills Commission and each State and Territory Government, based on areas of identified skills need and/or employment growth. As part of the 2021–22 Budget, the Australian Government announced it would commit an additional \$500 million, matched by State and Territory Governments, to expand the JobTrainer Fund by up to 163,000 additional training places and extend the program until 31 December 2022. The extension will ensure that Australians who want to reskill and upskill will continue to have access to free or low fee training.

As at 31 January 2022, the JobTrainer Fund has had over 320,000 enrolments, with nearly half of these enrolments being with public providers. Women represent around 55 per cent, and individuals who spoke a language other than English represent around 24 per cent of total enrolments.

Consistent with the broader vocational education and training sector, State and Territory Governments are responsible for administering the JobTrainer Fund, including selecting and contracting providers to deliver the training. They are also able to direct a portion of JobTrainer funds to maximise student outcomes through, for example, wrap-around support services.

To ensure future investment is targeted at areas of skill needs for our economic recovery now and into the future, the Australian Government is negotiating a new National Skills Agreement with State and Territory Governments.

More information on JobTrainer funded courses is available at www.myskills.gov.au.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Robert', written in a cursive style.

Stuart Robert